

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Office of the Spokesman**

For Immediate Release  
2010/1607

November 8, 2010

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**Parliamentary Elections in Azerbaijan**

The November 7 parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan were peaceful, with the participation of all opposition parties and observers from domestic groups and the international community. Nevertheless, the elections did not meet international standards. We support the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) mission's preliminary assessment that "the conduct of these elections overall was not sufficient to constitute meaningful progress in the democratic development of the country."

Some technical aspects of the election, including centralized registration and the inclusion of record numbers of domestic observers, constituted improvements, as did a modest increase in the percentage of female candidates. However, there were serious problems noted during the pre-election process and on Election Day itself.

We share concerns by the OSCE/ODIHR Observer Mission that the pre-election environment was characterized by a lack of balanced media coverage of candidates, continued restrictions on fundamental freedoms of assembly and expression, and a deficient candidate registration process that, taken together, resulted in an uneven playing field for candidates. On Election Day, observers from the U.S. Embassy in Baku, like their OSCE/ODIHR counterparts, noted serious violations of election procedures, including ballot box stuffing.

We call upon the Azerbaijani Government to focus now on adjudicating election grievances fairly, transparently, and expeditiously, ensuring accountability for officials who are suspected of interfering with the proper conduct of elections. We further urge the Azerbaijani government to respect freedom of expression, assembly, and association.

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